

who participated in a little known covert operation in World War II—Operation Ivory Soap. During World War II, “island hopping” was a critical element in the U.S. Pacific strategy. The idea was to capture Japanese held islands of tactical or strategic importance and by-pass any far-flung or inconsequential bases. Once an island was taken it was used as a forward airfield for aircraft returning from long-range missions where they were repaired, rearmed, and made ready for the next vital mission.

General Henry H. “Hap” Arnold, Commander of the Army Air Forces, recognized the need for forward-based, mobile air depots to support American bombers and fighters in the Pacific war. General Arnold and a panel of military officers determined the need for converting naval repair ships into hybrid aircraft depot ships. Eventually, six 440-foot-long Liberty ships and 18 smaller 180-foot-long auxiliary vessels would be modified into Aircraft Repair Units, carrying 344 men, and Aircraft Maintenance Units, manned by 48 troops. Everything from the smallest aircraft parts to complete fighter wings were carried on these ships. The repair and maintenance facilities were manned 24-hours a day and the Liberty ships included platforms to land the “new” helicopter for quick ship-to-shore repair transport.

The Army Air Force crews that manned these ships had to be trained to understand the nautical aspect of life at sea. Colonel Matthew Thompson of the Army Air Force was given the mission to turn airmen into seamen. Called back from Anzio in Italy, the Colonel had less than two weeks to organize the training program.

The Grand Hotel in Point Clear, AL, was the focal point for “Operation Ivory Soap” training. Colonel Thompson contacted the then owner, Mr. Strat White-Spunner, regarding the use of the hotel as his base of operations where he intended to instill basic seamanship, marine and aquatic training in the Army officers and men of the aircraft repair and maintenance units. As a donation to the war effort, Mr. Roberts turned the Grand Hotel and its facilities over to the US Army Air Force to be used as its Maritime Training School. Operation Ivory Soap training began on July 10, 1944.

Using the Grand Hotel, officers and men moved in and began living in “Navy style.” All personnel referred to the floors as decks, kept time by a ship’s bell and indulged in the use of tobacco only when the “smoking lamp” was lit. The courses included swimming, special calisthenics, marching, drill, navigation, ship identification, signaling, cargo handling, ship orientation, sail making, amphibious operations, and more. Two men from each ship were also trained to be underwater divers. During a five month

period, the school turned out 5,000 highly-trained Air Force seamen. When they and their ships went to war, so did Colonel Thompson. The men of the operation participated in the landings in the Philippines, Guam, Tinian, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. Fighter aircraft and B-29s taking off from these bases flew continuous missions over Japan. Many lives, as well as aircraft, were saved because of the men of the aircraft repair and maintenance units.

Perhaps the greatest tribute I can make to the exploits of these sea-going airmen is to paraphrase the Merchant Marines who worked with them and who praised them as “equal to any sea-going combatants they had ever served with.” This is a testament to their skill and professionalism and the ability of this nation to adjust its resources to defeat the enemy. The Grand Hotel still stands elegantly on the banks of the Mobile Bay. A hotel whose rich southern history embodies the best traditions of this country.●

JUDGE ROMAN S. GRIBBS, JUDGE FOR THE MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

● Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am delighted to rise today to acknowledge a distinguished public servant, from my home state of Michigan, Judge Roman S. Gribbs, who will be retiring from the bench of the Michigan Court of Appeals, at the close of this year. In November, hundreds of his colleagues, friends and family will celebrate the career of this gentleman of the bench who played a distinct role in shaping Michigan’s history.

Judge Gribbs dedicated his academic and professional life to studying, teaching, enforcing, practicing and interpreting the laws that govern the citizens of Michigan. He excelled in his studies at the University of Detroit where he received his Juris Doctorate in 1954, graduating Magna Cum Laude. He taught at his alma mater from 1954 through 1956 and served as an Adjunct Professor and Faculty member at the University of Michigan and the Thomas M. Cooley Law School. He implemented the law as an Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor from 1956 through 1964 and in his service to the City of Detroit as presiding Traffic Court Referee.

In 1968, Roman Gribbs’ career in the law took a new turn when he was appointed, then elected, Sheriff of Wayne County. His commitment to strong and fair enforcement of the law earned him respect far beyond the boundaries of Michigan’s most populous county.

In 1969, Sheriff Gribbs was elected mayor of the city of Detroit, just 2 years after the city had endured one of the most destructive civil disturbances in the Nation’s history. Under his leadership, the people of Detroit began to heal the city’s wounds, to bridge their

differences and to build their common future. As a newly elected member of Detroit’s City Council in those years, I can testify with first hand knowledge to the debt this great American city owes to the calm, determined leadership of Mayor Roman Gribbs.

After stepping down as mayor, Roman Gribbs followed his love for the law and won a seat on the bench of the Third Judicial Circuit and then on the Michigan Court of Appeals where he has served the people of Michigan with a high standard of ethics and courage.

In addition to being a dedicated man of the bench, Judge Gribbs also finds solace in his involvement in the arts. His interest in the humanities and the cultural arts is evidenced through his service as a member of the Founders Society of the Detroit Institute of Art, the Detroit Historical Society and the Michigan Opera Theater.

Despite all that Judge Gribbs has accomplished in a life of service to others those of us fortunate enough to have enjoyed his friendship may admire him most for the quiet qualities we have seen in him over many years—his unyielding integrity, his uncommon decency and perhaps most amazingly, given the tumultuous times he has lived in, his gentleness.

Judge Gribbs can take pride in his long career of service and dedication to the law and to the people of Michigan. I know my colleagues will join me in saluting this man from Michigan, and in wishing him well in the years ahead.●

TRIBUTE TO COMMANDER CATHERINE A. WILSON

● Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, as the 106th Congress draws to a close, I stand to pay tribute to a distinguished Navy officer who served as a Congressional Science Detail on my staff during this Congress. Commander Catherine Wilson, United States Navy, was selected for this highly coveted position as a result of her outstanding training, experience, and accomplishments. Her superb performance and impeccable credentials earned her the respect and admiration of the Senate staff. She distinguished herself rapidly as a professional who possessed a pleasant demeanor, tremendous integrity, decisive leadership style, political savvy, and unending energy. The ultimate Naval officer, Commander Wilson is a visionary thinker who has the innate ability to implement these visions. Commander Wilson is the consummate professional and nursing has never had a better ambassador nor patients a more devoted advocate.

Commander Wilson forged strong alliances and affiliations with staff from a myriad of Congressional offices, committees, and federal and civilian agencies that fostered a cohesive approach to legislative proposals. She worked